COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting (Hybrid)

RECEIVED
COLCHESTER, CT
2024 APR 18 PM 12:08
TOWN CLERK

Tuesday, April 16, 2024
6:00 PM
William J. Johnston Middle School

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Alexander Oliphant, Secretary Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci, Michelle Millington and Stefanie Tracey-Calash.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Assistant Superintendent Jessica L. Kuckel, Bacon Academy (BA) Principal Amy Begué, Jack Jackter Intermediete School (JJIS) Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds, BA Student Board Member Mariam Kasli and Director of Educational Operations Andrew Barillari.

OTHERS PRESENT: Business Director Rachel Linkkila, Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Alyssa Fratoni.

1. MEETING OPENING

1.1 Call to Order
Chair Alexander Oliphant called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM

1.2 Roll Call
Chair Oliphant conducted a roll call of the Board

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

2. RECOGNITIONS / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2.1 Jack Jackter Intermediete School Recognitions

a. JJIS Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds presented, congratulations to the Fire Prevention Poster contest winners 5th grader, Sophia Sherry and 4th grader, Lucas LaBarre. Also, congratulations to 5th graders Olive Boyd-Bindham and Caroline Fraiser for winning the Zaner-Bloser's National Handwriting Contest.

3. STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS REPORT

3.1 Student Board Members Report

a. BA Student Board Member Mariam Kasli discussed. March is Mental Health Awareness month. BA used games, activites and demonstrations to show students how to cope and how "it is okay to not be okay". The event helped bring awareness to mental health and the health of those around you. Colchester Elementary School (CES) held Half Day Hooray, where BA students volunteered with CES students to make crafts and had story time with them. Students are looking forward to more events to come.

4. *ADDITIONS / CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

4.1 *New Agenda Items

a. Superintendent Sullivan requested to add 2 items to the agenda
   i. Unpaid leave for a staff member.
   ii. Environmental update.

b. **Motion by:** A. Oliphant
Moved to add Unpaid leave for a staff member and the environmental update to the agenda under 8.3 and 8.4, respectively.
Second: M. Gignac
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1 For public comments, please see Bylaw on Meeting Conduct

a. iPhone 135 via Zoom (later named Deanna Bouchard) stated that she had trouble finding the Zoom link to the meeting and she could not find it on the Website. She is requesting that the Board of Education Budget Chair, the Board Chair or someone else on the Board attend the next Board of Finance meeting/workshop. D. Bouchard also stated that the budget should include all salaries. D. Bouchard also spoke about how she believes it is the responsibility of the Board to provide information related to the Capital Reserve Account.

6. REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

6.1 Staff Recognition Days

a. Superintendent Sullivan brought attention to the most recent and upcoming Staff Recognition Days - April 3rd was Paraprofessional Day, April 24th is Office Professional & Administrative Assistant Day, May 1st is School Administrators Day, May 3rd is Cafeteria Staff Day, May 8th is School Nurse Day and the week of May 6th is Staff Appreciation Week. Superintendent Sullivan said that our staff members are very dedicated to the schools and many staff members also live in the community. He is asking that we take time to send appreciation to staff members over the coming weeks.

6.2 State Bond Update

a. Superintendent Sullivan stated that local legislaters are doing what they can to support Colchester Public Schools to get bonding for the roof at BA, paving and the Sound Field initiative to meet the needs of those who need adaptive assistance for hearing.

6.3 Freedom of Information Act

a. Superintendent Sullivan addressed the topics of transparency and openness since his hire in November 2022. The District has built a webpage with extensive amounts of information. These efforts from the Superintendent and the District as a whole are efforts to restore and provide trust within the community. Superintendent Sullivan wants to make it clear that those priorities he had upon his hiring have not changed. Superintendent Sullivan stated that his position provides and invites criticism, and that feedback is beneficial. He stated that ethics and integrity are essential in his job. Superintendent Sullivan stated that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was

brought on after the effects of Watergate and the distrust in the Government. FOIA is a right for persons to access most documented records but it is a balance between total openness and the needs to protect privacy and security. The volume and complexity of the requests as of late have become a burden to the Central Office Staff. Since January 2024, there has been 37 FIO requests. Since March 12, 2024 (the last BOE meeting) there have been 26 FOI requests, including 16 from one individual. There have been several requests regarding office furniture and renovations over the past two years. Total office furniture cost was $48,176.00 and total office renovations cost was $66,692.25.Superintendent Sullivan opened to comments from the Board regarding FOI.

i. M. Gignac thanked Superintendent Sullivan, she stated that the detailed explanation was well done and appreciates the information.
ii. A. Oliphant requested to see the list of the 37 FOI requests since January 1, 2024. Superintendent Sullivan stated that the list is on the Website.

7. *APPPROVAL OF MINUTES

7.1 Board of Education Budget Workshop 2 Meeting Minutes of March 9, 2024
7.2 Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2024
7.3 Board of Education Special Meeting Minutes of March 18, 2024

a. **Motion by** : D. Antonacci
Moved to approve the minutes from March 9, 2024, March 12, 2024 and March 18, 2024 as a block.
Second : M. Gignac
Roll Call : All in favor
Vote : Motion Carried

8. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS

8.1 Discussion and Possible Action on Establishing Tuition for the 2024-2025 Academic Year

a. Superintendent Sullivan stated that Colchester Public Schools currently charge $12,900 for Out of District tuition. He gathered some comparison data and wants to know where the Board would like to go in regards to tuition. He stated that he would not like to charge too high, as we want to add more districts to our list in the future. Superintendent Sullivan gave a comparison to LEARN's published rates for the next academic year, and Superintendent Sullivan is recommending we be near their rates. Superintendent Sullivan answered that he would be fine with following LEARN or EastConn due to Colchester being on the border of the two.

Motion by : M. Millington
Moved to maintain the current tuition rates for 1 year and to review next year. Also to align Special Education rates with LEARN.
Second : M. Gignac
Roll Call : All in favor
Vote : Motion Carried

8.2 *Discussion and Possible Action of the Budget

a. Superintendent Sullivan stated that the Board of Education is invited back to the May 7, 2024 Budget Finance Workshop #4 for the Town. He stated that the Board of Finance (BOF) indicated that they were going to gather questions and give to the BOE in advance.The Superintendent stated that there is no action to take at this time, just await the questions and go to the next meeting prepared.

8.3 *Addition - Request for Unpaid Leave for an Office Professional

a. Superintendent Sullivan stated that there is an Office Professional that has exhausted all FMLA and paid time off. The employee was out of work from September 28, 2023 thru December 18,

2023 and is now requesting unpaid leave beginning April 25, 2024 to have surgery.

Motion by : D, Antonacci
Moved to have this topic discussed in Executive Session
Second : S. Tracey-Calash
Roll Call : All in favor
Vote : Motion Carried

8.4*Addition - Environmental Update

a. The Superintendent was informed on Friday April 12, 2024 by Director of Educational Operations Andrew Barillari after the Town experienced heavy rains that a hallway and some classrooms in BA were flooded due to a curtain drain by the baseball field being 95% clogged due to a root ball. On Monday April 15, 2024, the drain was cleared. During the extraction of the root ball, it was noted that a shiny, metallic look was on top of the water and the root ball seemed to be saturated with oil, which was likely causing the oil leak in 2022. The District notified the Department of Environmental Protection (DEEP). A representative from DEEP came out and said it was not a major issue and someone would be out to follow up. A. Barillari stated that two other pipes are under investigation for the same issue.

9. REPORTS FROM BOARD COMMITTEES

9.1 Budget Finance Committee
   a. No Updates
9.2 Curriculum Committee
   a. Next meeting is in May.
9.3 Facilities Committee
   a. No updates
9.4 Policy Committee
   a. Next meeting April 17, 2024 to discuss 9000 series.

10. BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION ITEMS

10.1 Next Meeting
   a. Scheduled for May 14, 2024. Depending on what happens at the May 7, 2024 Board of Finance meeting, may be able to address budget or may need to have a Special Meeting.
10.2 Personnel Report
   a. Continue to hire, at this point we are looking to be in a pretty good place with being fully staffed.
10.3 Notice of Returement / Resignations
   a. Posted online on Board Docs agenda for this meeting.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT

11.1 For public comments, please see Bylaw on Meeting Conduct.

a. Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson addressed a previous comment to show where to find the zoom link on the website.

b. Michael Dubreiul - thanked the Superintendent for clearing up conflict regarding Field Turf / Liberty Landscape relationships or lack there of. As for FOI requests, Michael stated that citizens and Board Members would see his name a lot on the list.

c. Deanna Bouchard - Spoke about tuition rates for other school districts. Spoke about how if Colchester raised tuition, it would affect the tax payers and in her opinion, people cannot

afford another tax increase. Deanna also stated that citizens and Board Members would see her name alot on the list for FOI requests.

Motion by: D. Antonacci
Moved to go into Executive Session inviting Superintendent Sullivan and BA Principal Amy Begue.
Second : S. Tracey-Calash
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion Carried

Board went into Executive session at 7:05 PM
Board came out of Executive Session at 7:23 PM

Motion by: M. Gignac
Moved to approve leave on or after May 24, 2024.
Second : M. Millington
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion Carried

12. ADJOURNMENT
Motion by: M. Gignac
Moved to adjourn.
Second: S. Tracey-Calash
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

A. Oliphant adjourned the meeting at 7:24 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Alyssa Fratoni
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent